

FY 2008

*Regional Planning Affiliation 8
(RPA)*

*Public Involvement Policy Plan
(PIP)*



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICY PLAN

FY 2008 East Central Intergovernmental Association Regional Planning Affiliation 8 Public Involvement Policy Plan

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The ECIA RPA (Region 8) consists of local jurisdictions including:

Counties of:

Clinton County
Delaware County
Dubuque County
Jackson County

Cities over 5,000:

Clinton, Dewitt
Manchester
Maquoketa

Transit Systems:

Clinton MTA
Great River Bend
Region 8 RTA

50 Small Cities in:

Clinton County
Delaware County
Dubuque County
Jackson County

DISCLAIMER

The preparation of this report was financed in part through a federal grant by the Federal Highway Administration under the provision of the 1964 Federal-Aid Highway Act, as amended

CAVEAT

THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A STANDARD, SPECIFICATION, OR REGULATION.

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Regional Planning Affiliation 8

The Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA 8) is designated as a four-county region excluding the Dubuque Metropolitan Area (MPO.) The RPA 8 region encompasses the counties of Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson, which are located in the eastern-central portion of the State of Iowa. Three of the counties, Dubuque, Jackson and Clinton, are bordered on the eastern edges by the Mississippi River. Within this region, the RPA 8 services 57 cities and all of the rural areas in all of their transportation needs. The sizes of the cities range from Durango's 24 in population to Clinton's 27, 772, giving the RPA 8 a vast set of circumstances for which to work with.

I: PURPOSE

RPA 8 *Public Involvement Policy (PIP)* was developed due to a need for proactive citizen involvement in the *Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)* and all other planning activities conducted by RPA 8. The public involvement process will provide the following:

- Complete and accurate information to the public
- Timely notices of public hearings
- Complete access to all key decisions made at public hearings
- Continuing involvement of the public

This PIP is developed in hopes that it will promote and encourage citizen involvement in the decision making process. It is the obligation and responsibility of RPA 8 to provide information and consider public input in decision making as prescribed by the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)*. In worst case scenarios, public participation does not occur until after the community becomes aware of an unpopular policy decision. In such a case citizen involvement mobilized to overturn or amend a decision that had already been made. Late citizen involvement prolongs the planning process and ultimately costs more in terms of resources and staff time. Public involvement in decision making process at an early stage makes such occurrences minimal or non-existe

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II: GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In keeping with the spirit of public involvement and participation, RPA 8 will follow a systematic approach that will allow the public to become involved in transportation issues through increased participation. RPA 8 will consistently adhere to established guidelines as a means of heightening public involvement.

Utilizing various techniques to solicit public involvement has proven to be the most effective means by which to attract citizen involvement. The Regional Planning Affiliation is such a diverse area in terms of geographical, socioeconomic, and cultural areas that it takes more than just one technique to capture the attention of citizens. RPA 8 remains committed to using a variety of resources by which to reach out to the public and attempt to engender public participation.

RPA 8 is committed to the concept of public participation and will work hard to ensure that the public has an active role in transportation planning decisions. It is hoped that this public participation will reduce unfavorable public opinions of transportation projects by making an active outreach for public involvement and incorporating public sentiment into the planning process.

III: HISTORY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AT RPA 8

Since the inception of RPA 8 as the region planning agency for Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson County area, public participation and input as has always been one of the priorities in the transportation planning process. RPA 8 shares some of the same historical perspectives in citizen involvement that many planning organizations across the country have experienced. RPA 8 opened there policy and tech meetings to public from 1998. The RPA 8 Technical Committee reviews the policy recommendation and vote to approve or disapprove the recommendation; the issue was then placed before the RPA 8 Policy Board for final consideration.

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Public Input at RPA 8 Meetings

RPA 8 has always provided citizens with the opportunity to voice their opinions on transportation issues during the RPA 8 Policy Board meetings. When transportation issues are being decided upon by the RPA 8 Policy Board, the RPA 8 Policy Board Chair calls for any public input or comments. This process is followed for any transportation enhancements, TIP, or LRTP projects that are put before the Policy Board for final consideration and a vote.

IV: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

Goal:

Able to get public's attention and have them provide their opinions and comments in order to have a meaningful impact on transportation decisions.

Objective 1: Public Access

RPA 8 will provide timely notice and reasonable access to the public information on transportation issues and processes.

Public Access Policies:

- **Documents:**

It shall be the policy of RPA 8 that all plans and documents shall be made available for the public to review at the RPA 8 office. When citizens request to obtain copies of current RPA 8 plans and documents, the documents shall be provided upon request.

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Current copies of the RPA 8 Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Plan, and any other regularly published documents shall be distributed to all public libraries in the RPA 8 planning boundary as well as local planning departments and city governments associated with RPA 8.

- **Notices:**
RPA 8 shall provide to the media any notices and agendas of any board or committee meetings that have been scheduled. RPA 8 will provide such notification within (4-20) days prior to when meetings are scheduled to occur.
- **Access:**
RPA 8 will make every effort possible to provide reasonable access to technical and policy information.
- **Assistance:**
RPA 8 will make every effort to provide assistance upon request to any and all citizens who require some special assistance to attend any RPA 8 meeting.
- **Meeting Locations:**
All RPA 8 meetings and workshops and all of its advisory committees shall be held in ADA compliant locations.

Objective 2: Public Outreach

RPA 8 recognizes the need for opportunities to be created for all segments of the general public to become informed and educated about issues and proposals that it may be under consideration by the policy committee. RPA 8 especially recognizes the need for public outreach for those citizens who might be directly affected by the outcome of projects under consideration or might not currently be well served by the transportation system.

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Public Outreach Policies:

- **Informing the Public:**
RPA 8 will attempt to inform the public about all issues under consideration through public workshops, newsletters, exhibits, ECIA website or other techniques during the development of each of its transportation plans, studies, and projects.
- **Public Notification Lists:**
RPA 8 will develop and maintain a list of civic and public service organizations in addition to interested or potentially interested persons for the purpose of distributing information about its planning activities. Efforts will be made to include members of potentially underserved groups.
- **Annual Review:**
RPA 8 will conduct an annual review of its public involvement procedures to gauge the effectiveness of soliciting public input and citizen participation at public meetings. Of particular importance in this review will be an examination of public participation process to determine if underserved citizen groups have been reached and given the opportunity to participate in the public involvement process.
- **Public Hearings:**
RPA 8 will conduct public hearings as herein outlined prior to the adoption of each of the transportation plans and programs for which it is responsible, including the LRTP, TIP, and transportation improvement priorities, and on substantive amendments and annual updates.
- **Previously Received Public Comments:**
RPA 8 will, upon request, provide previously received public comments relating to all transportation plans.
- **Public Comment during Public Meetings:**
RPA 8 will provide an opportunity for the public to comment during any public meetings.

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V: PLANNING PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Public Participation Process

The RPA 8 public participation process will be reviewed annually by RPA 8 staff to determine if revisions are necessary. If revisions occur, the draft of the new policy will be made available for public review for 45 days. These public hearings will be held as part of a regularly scheduled RPA 8 meeting. The meeting will be held at location that is accessible to transit-dependent and disabled residents.

Long Range Transportation Plan

The most recent Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update was adopted on December, 1994. It is an extensive plan that outlines the current 20-year planning horizon for the RPA 8 planning area. The LRTP is a living document in that it is constantly under revision and being updated to reflect the region's needs for transportation planning.

The RPA 8 is required by federal regulations to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunity to comment on the LRTP and then publish the plan thereby making it readily available to the public for review and provide for early and continuous input.

One or more Public input meetings will be held to gather information during the planning process and one public input meeting will be held for draft plan approval and one for final plan approval.

Revisions, Developments and Updates:

In the event of revisions, developments and updates to LRTP, there will be a 45-day comment period for the general public to voice any comments pertaining to the proposed changes.

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Transportation Enhancement

RPA 8 will make a concerted effort to make a wide variety of interest groups and the public aware of the transportation enhancement activities in the Regional Planning Area. Among the groups that will be informed of the Transportation Enhancement Program application cycle are the area's chambers of commerce, RTA, MTA, cities in the RPA 8 planning boundary, the Department of Transportation for the state of Iowa, and various civic organizations that have expressed an interest in the Transportation Enhancement Program. In addition, press releases will be issued to the local media and the information will be posted on ECIA website.

Transportation Improvement Program

RPA 8, in cooperation with the IADOT and RTA transit system and MTA transit system, is required to develop a TIP for the region. RPA 8, is further required to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, other affected employee representatives, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed program during the process.

The TIP is to have a listing of projects that are scheduled to be carried out within a 4-year period of when they were initially adopted into the RPA 8 TIP. The TIP will include a financial explanation of the improvement projects that detail how the project will be implemented as well as an indication of what public and private resources can be expected to be made available to complete the transportation improvement.

Before the RPA 8 Policy Committee can approve any transportation improvement, it will provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties with reasonable notice of and an opportunity to comment on the proposed improvement.

The TIP Process will include the following steps:

- RPA 8 staff will distribute project applications in January to the membership organizations in the RPA 8 area.
- RPA 8 staff will collect applications from the members in February and begin developing TIP following rules and regulations adopted by FHWA in selecting TIP projects.

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- After the draft TIP is finished, it will be released for a 30-day public review process in April. RPA 8 staff will inform the public of the draft TIP's availability by sending notice to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation proceslist and by publishing legal notices in local newspapers and ECIA website. Theses notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.
- After the final TIP is finished, it will be released for a 30-day public review process in June. RPA 8 staff will inform the public of the final TIP's availability by sending notice to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation process list and by publishing legal notices in local newspapers and ECIA website. Theses notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.

Amendments to the TIP:

TIP amendment will be necessary when a new project is added or when a project is moved from last two years to first of the three years of the TIP.

An amendment will require the following steps:

- After receiving an official request from the project sponsor. Staff will begin the amendment process by releasing a 30 days reviewing period. Staff will inform the public of the proposed amendment by sending notices to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation mailing list and by publishing a legal notice in the local newspapers and ECIA website. Theses notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.
- The state DOT will be updated with the amendment through TPMS.

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Revisions to the TIP:

TIP revisions will be necessary when there are minor changes to projects listed in the TIP. Staff will update the RPA 8 policy and technical board on the revised item and notify the state DOT with the change through TPMS.

Transportation Planning Work Program

The Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP) is a program outlining the various transportation planning activities to be conducted by the staff for the Regional Planning Affiliation 8 (RPA 8). The TPWP is prepared and adopted each year and contains transportation planning activities for the current fiscal year.

The TPWP Process will include the following steps:

- RPA 8 staff will start developing TPWP in month of February; following rules and regulations adopted by FHWA.
- After the draft TPWP is finished, it will be released for a 30-day public review process in March. RPA 8 staff will inform the public of the draft TPWP's availability by sending notice to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation process list and by publishing legal notices in local newspapers and ECIA website. These notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.
- After the final TPWP is finished, it will be released for a 30-day public review process in May. RPA 8 staff will inform the public of the final TPWP's availability by sending notice to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation process list and by publishing legal notices in local newspapers and ECIA website. These notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.

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Amendments to TPWP:

TPWP amendment will be necessary when a new work item is added.

An amendment will require the following steps:

- Staff will begin the amendment process by releasing a 30 days reviewing period. Staff will inform the public of the proposed amendment by sending notices to the organizations on the RPA 8 public participation mailing list and by publishing a legal notice in the local newspapers and ECIA website. These notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- The public hearing meeting will be held with the RPA 8 policy meeting and the meeting will be opened for public input during the process.
- The state DOT will be updated with the amendment through TPMS.

Revisions to TPWP:

TPWP revisions will be necessary when there are minor changes to project description and dollar amounts. Staff will update the RPA 8 policy and technical board on the revised item and notify the state DOT with the change through TPMS.

Transit Development Plan (Working)

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice (EJ) is a federal term that was created in 1994 when President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898. EJ involves the need to ensure that low-income and minority population groups are not disproportionately affected by the transportation planning process. Historically, such groups are under-represented in the planning process and EJ is designed to ensure that the public involvement process makes every attempt to solicit their input.

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RPA 8 is committed to ensuring that low-income and minority population groups, as well as all citizens in the Dubuque Metropolitan Area, have sufficient access to the transportation planning process and are given every opportunity to voice their opinions at RPA 8 meetings.

RPA 8 staff will continue to use US Census Block Group Data and GIS technology to identify concentrations of minority and low-income populations in the RPA 8 area. This information will continue to be used to determine if proposed transportation projects will adversely affect these populations. Staff will make additional efforts to engage minority and low-income residents in public participation. The following outreach efforts are illustrative of measures that may be taken as appropriate to provide citizen access to the process. Failure to use any one of these shall not be considered as violation of this plan.

Mailing List:

Develop a comprehensive mailing list of interested parties, public and private agencies that provide and utilize transportation services and use to send summary information and public hearing comments period notices.

Postings/ Bulletins:

Publicize Public hearing participation opportunities through this medium especially in churches located in low and moderate income areas where projects are proposed.

VI: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES

Regular Public Hearings

RPA 8 will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption or amendment of each of the following planning products. These public hearings may be held as part of a regularly scheduled RPA 8 meeting.

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Substantive Public Comments

When substantive public written and oral comments are received on the draft LRTP, TIP, RTDP or TPWP as a result of the public involvement process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be prepared and made available upon request.

Notification of Documents to Interested Parties

The following describes the notification process for the materials that shall be made available, the process of documenting the input received, public hearings conducted as part of the development, updates, and amendment processes for the LRTP, TIP, TPWP, RTDP and transportation improvement priorities.

- ***Public Notice***
A public notice announcing a scheduled public hearing shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the RPA 8 area. These notices will be printed 4-20 days before the scheduled meeting.
- ***Press Releases***
Press releases announcing scheduled public hearings shall be provided to community newspapers and local broadcasters throughout the RPA 8.

Printed – Graphical Material

Any printed or graphical material that is available shall be provided by either RPA 8 staff or the appropriate agency upon request.

Public Comments

Copies of all public comments received prior to the hearing shall be provided by either the RPA 8 staff at or before the public hearing. A summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of the comments received shall be prepared and made available upon request.

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VII: PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

Public Information Workshops

Public information workshops shall be announced through a press release, which will be transmitted to newspapers and broadcasters throughout the Regional Planning Affiliation area one week prior to the date of that workshop. Notices of these workshops shall be mailed to standing mailing list and other interested parties.

A public workshop or exhibit shall be conducted prior to the adoption and/or comprehensive update of the RPA's Long Range Transportation Plan. These workshops or exhibits shall be held in locations that are easily accessible to a broad cross-section of Regional Planning Affiliation residents. A Transportation Enhancement Activity (TEA) application workshop shall be conducted by RPA 8 staff to explain the application process and scheduled a minimum of 30 days prior to the deadline for submitting applications to RPA 8. A public exhibit or workshop shall be held in the community affected by a transportation improvement currently under consideration as part of a special study of a specific corridor being undertaken by RPA 8.

Transportation Presentations

RPA 8 will give presentations on a regular basis to community groups as a means of providing information to the public on transportation issues. It has proven more effective to provide presentations to community groups that encompass a wider representation of the community than to target single identity groups where public outreach is minimal.

RPA 8 Meetings & Locations

Meeting notices and agendas shall be mailed to everyone who requests them. They shall also be available to the public at the RPA 8 office during business hours. **Meetings, public hearings, and RPA 8 formal events are held in facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities.** Public notices of RPA 8 meetings and events include a notice of location for public. Individuals with disabilities will be provided with accommodations to attend the meetings on request with a minimum of a week notice. Individuals requiring special material or presentation formats will be asked to contact the staff at least a week before the meeting.

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VIII: FEDERAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STANDARDS

The public involvement process requirements in *23 CFR 450, Section 450.316(b)(1)*, are listed below. These requirements encourage a proactive public involvement process and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in the planning process. The requirements listed are addressed in RPA 8 Transportation Study Policy.

- Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
- Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);
- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
- Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (in nonattainment areas, classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan) TIP and major amendment(s);
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;
- When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;
- If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the RPA and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;

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- Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the RPA in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;
- These procedures will be reviewed by the FHWA and the FTA during Certification reviews for TMAS, and as otherwise necessary for all RPAs, to assure that full and open access is provided to decision-making processes;
- Regional Planning affiliation's public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

